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LINCOLN IN CARICATURE

BY

RUFUS ROCKWELL WILSON

AUTHOR OF

"WASHINGTON: THE CAPITAL CITY"

Illustrated With Thirty-two Plates

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LINCOLN IN CARICATURE

IN the eight and thirty years that have elapsed since the close of the Civil War, old passions have died out and old prejudices have passed away. The fame of Lincoln, the greatest figure in that conflict, has taken on heroic proportions, and, influenced, no doubt by the august place he now holds in our history, people, have in a measure forgotten that he was the most bitterly assailed and the most savagely caricatured public man of his time. Such, however, was the fact, and one has but to search the newspapers and periodicals of the period to find striking confirmation of it.

The attitude of Great Britain toward the Union and its President was then one of cynical and scarcely veiled hostility, and nowhere were the sentiments of the English government and of the English masses more faithfully reflected than in the cartoons which appeared in London *Punch* between 1861 and 1865, many of which had Lincoln for their central figure. All of these cartoons were drawn by Sir John Tenniel, at that period in the very flush of his remarkable powers, and are marked by the almost perfect draughtsmanship and the gift for satire to which that artist owes his unique place in the history of modern caricature.

The American counterpart of *Punch*, when the Civil War opened, was *Vanity Fair*, which, between 1859 and 1863, ran a checkered but lively existence. The designer of a majority of the cartoons which appeared in *Vanity Fair* during the period mentioned, was the late Henry Louis Stephens, a man of fertile and incisive wit, who had much of Tenniel's ability to enforce a pictorial moral by simple yet telling methods. Mr. Stephens' earlier cartoons of Lincoln reveal the not always good-natured suspicion with which the public generally regards a new and untried man, but no sooner had Sumter been fired upon than he became an ardent supporter of the Union cause and its leader, and many of his cartoons dealing with Lincoln reveal as nothing else can, the earnest and unyielding spirit of a time that tried men's souls.

Other American periodicals of the Civil War period in which Lincoln was caricatured were *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, the *New York*

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Illustrated News and *Harper's Weekly*, and nowhere were the changing sentiments of the people of the North, their likes and dislikes, their alternate hopes and fears, their hasty, often unjust, judgments of men and measures, more vividly reflected than in the cartoons having the President for a central figure, which appeared in their pages.

Collectors of Lincolniana, in view of these facts, will be interested in a forthcoming work to be entitled "Lincoln in Caricature," which proposes to bring together the most noteworthy caricatures of the great war President. The projected collection will contain not less than thirty-two carefully selected plates, with portfolio, and will be accompanied by explanatory text by Rufus Rockwell Wilson, the well-known writer, who has made a thorough study of the subject. It is designed distinctly for collectors and to preserve in suitable form the color of the most momentous period in our history

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